



Clean Water

MORRO BAY CONSERVATION PLAN PROTECTS COASTAL GEM

In late 2000, EPA and California Governor Gray Davis approved a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) for the Morro Bay National Estuary Program in San Luis Obispo County. The plan sets forth commitments by over 75 public agencies, organizations, and businesses to take specific actions to protect the scenic bay and its watershed.

The **Morro Bay Estuary** provides habitat for hundreds of species of birds and marine life. It also supports an oyster fishery and a harbor for fishing and recreational boats. But the bay is threatened by upland soil erosion, which has filled the shallow waterway with enough sediment to reduce its water volume by one-fourth over the past century. The conservation plan addresses this problem as well as flood control, water supply, and pollution.

Much of the restoration work, including stream restoration projects, is already underway. Since 1995,

EPA has contributed over \$2.3 million to help create the plan and put it into effect. One participating organization, the Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District, helped **landowners and public land managers in the Estuary's watershed put 245 soil conservation practices into effect**, preventing 172,000 *tons* of soil from washing downstream into Morro Bay. Seven volunteer monitoring groups are routinely collecting data on the ecological health of the creeks and the bay.

For more information on the Morro Bay National Estuary Program, go to www.mbnep.org

PUBLIC NOTICES, ENFORCEMENT MAKE DRINKING WATER SAFER

Under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) Amendments passed by Congress in 1996, EPA began requiring water utilities to annually send each customer a "Consumer Confidence Report" disclosing the results of required routine testing for contaminants. Consumers are now notified quickly—within 24 hours in cases of

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Through the Morro Bay National Estuary Program, government agencies and landowners are cooperating to prevent upstream soil erosion that threatens to fill the shallow bay and surrounding wetlands.

Facing page: Morro Rock, a landmark on California's Central Coast, looms over Morro Bay. Photo by Roland and Karen Muschenetz.

bacterial or viral contamination—regarding any problem that compromises drinking water safety.

This public notification requirement makes water providers accountable to their customers for any violation of drinking water standards and monitoring requirements. It's a powerful incentive for water suppliers to ensure that they provide safe drinking water at all times.

Failure to comply with drinking water standards and monitoring requirements puts water supplies at risk and prompts enforcement actions by the states or EPA. In one EPA enforcement case, the city of **Phoenix, Arizona**, last year paid a \$350,000 penalty and agreed to complete safe drinking water projects worth \$1.26 million, because the city failed to consistently comply with requirements for drinking water monitoring and reporting (to state regulators) between 1993 and 1996. Under a court-approved settlement, the penalty was divided equally between Arizona and the federal government.

In another case, EPA last year ordered the city of **Fallon, Nevada**, to adhere to a strict schedule for removing arsenic from its drinking water. This naturally-occurring but toxic element in Fallon's groundwater has measured as high as 100 parts per billion (ppb)—nearly double the national drinking water standard.

The EPA order requires Fallon to build and operate a treatment system to remove most of the arsenic from the city's drinking water by September 2003. Meanwhile, Fallon residents have been advised to find alternative drinking water sources, such as bottled water.

For more information on safe drinking water issues, go to www.epa.gov/safewater or call EPA's drinking water hotline at 800-426-4791.

FEDERAL, STATE PARTNERS APPROVE CALFED BAY-DELTA WATER PLAN

EPA played a key role in negotiating the unprecedented 30-year San Francisco Bay-Delta water plan approved in August, 2000 by a consortium of federal and state agencies known as CALFED. **The plan's main goals are ecological restoration of the Sacramento and San Joaquin watersheds, and ensuring reliable water supplies for agriculture and urban users.**

The Delta supplies drinking water for more than 22 million Californians and irrigation for thousands of farms, as well as providing habitat for hundreds of fish and wildlife species. Studies have shown alarming declines since the 1960s in fish populations that rely on Delta waters, such as salmon, striped bass, and delta smelt. Water diversions from the Delta during the six-year drought of 1987-1992 brought some of these populations to the brink of extinction.

CALFED started work on the plan in 1995, in hopes of resolving decades of legal and political "Water Wars" between farm groups, cities, and environmentalists over allocation of **California's largest source of fresh water**, the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta system. EPA worked with many state and federal agencies to hammer out agreements on a host of complex and often controversial issues.

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ALLAN OTA

Drinking water monitoring and reporting requirements help ensure that public water supplies are consistently safe to drink.

The final CALFED plan includes an unprecedented \$8.5 billion worth of investments over the next 30 years to improve water quality, increase water conservation, expand water storage facilities, increase water reliability, and restore fish and wildlife habitat.

For details, go to the CALFED Bay-Delta Program Web site, at calfed.ca.gov, or contact EPA's Carolyn Yale at (415) 744-2016 or yale.carolyn@epa.gov.

EPA COURT VICTORY IS GOOD NEWS FOR FISH, ANGLERS

In an April, 2000 decision involving the **Garcia River in Mendocino County, California**, a federal court in San Francisco upheld EPA's and the states' authority to limit the amount of pollutants entering U.S. waterways via runoff from urban areas, farms and forests.

In the case, plaintiffs challenged EPA's action in limiting the amount of sediment allowed to enter the river from its surrounding watershed. In recent years, excessive sediment from eroding unpaved roads and logging areas has often muddied the Garcia and other coastal rivers, destroying spawning habitat for salmon and steelhead trout. In 1998, EPA set a "total maximum daily load" (TMDL), or limit, for sediment washing into the river. A TMDL is the maximum amount of a particular pollutant that can be flushed into a waterway without exceeding water quality standards.

EPA successfully argued that the federal Clean Water Act of 1972 gives EPA and the states authority to set such limits. In the first decision to squarely address this issue, the federal judge agreed. Since runoff now

accounts for most of the uncontrolled pollution entering American waterways, the ruling is a crucial advance toward achieving clean water nationwide.

The decision is good news for the other watersheds for which EPA has developed TMDLs in the last three years: **The South Fork Eel, Noyo, Ten-mile, Navarro, Van Duzen, South Fork Trinity Rivers, and Redwood Creek on California's North Coast; and San Diego Creek and Newport Bay in Southern California.**

The development of a TMDL for the South Fork of the Van Duzen River provides an example of local landowners' participation and cooperation in the TMDL process. EPA's Chris Heppe, based in Arcata, Humboldt County, worked with the local resource conservation district (Humboldt County RCD) to create a forum for local involvement. With an EPA grant, the RCD hired a watershed coordinator, local landowner Dina Moore. Moore interviewed landowners and held workshops to get their perspective on historical watershed conditions and land uses, as well as listen to their goals, interests and experiences. At the workshops, Heppe answered landowner questions and concerns about TMDLs. The results included a compilation of historical anecdotes about the watershed, but more importantly, a measure of trust between Heppe and the landowners. Later, they helped Heppe assess sediment loadings to the river. The final product was a TMDL supported by local landowners.

Last year, the state of California developed a TMDL to limit selenium in the **San Joaquin Valley's Salt Slough**, and **Arizona** set TMDLs limiting mercury pollution in **Arivaca and Pena Blanca Lakes**. Over the next decade, EPA's Pacific Southwest Regional office and the state of California will be working on dozens more TMDLs to clean up additional polluted waterways.

For more details, go to EPA's regional TMDL Web page, at www.epa.gov/region09/water/tmdl

CLEAN WATER NEWS

Dairy Partnership Prevents Water Pollution: In 1999, EPA joined the California Dairy Quality Assurance Partnership to help state and federal agencies and the dairy industry create a voluntary program to **prevent water pollution from the 30 million tons of manure** produced annually by the state's 1.2 million dairy cows. EPA contributed \$443,740 to fund an environmental certification program, including pollution pre-



J. BRANCH

About 90% of the nation's coral reef habitat is in EPA's Pacific Southwest Region, which includes Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

Jane Freeman: EPA's Lake Tahoe Coordinator

In the last few decades, the growing popularity of the Lake Tahoe region for recreation has worsened soil erosion and water pollution in the Tahoe Basin, threatening the lake's world-famous clarity. In 1997, hundreds of people participated in a Presidential Forum at the lake to discuss how to save this national treasure by addressing land use, wetlands loss, storm-water runoff, soil erosion, air pollution, and other issues.

One result was the EPA's assignment in 1998 of Jane Freeman to work full time on coordinating federal involvement in Lake Tahoe issues.

Jane works closely with the Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Army Corps of Engineers and Department of Transportation on funding and planning ecological restoration projects. She also works with local groups such as the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), the Chamber of Commerce, the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board, UC Davis (which has led scientific research at the Lake since the 1960s), the University of Nevada, environmental groups, gaming and ski industry representatives, and the Washoe Indian Tribe.

The federal government has pledged approximately \$300 million for Lake Tahoe environmental programs over the next 10 years. A key project, jointly funded by federal, state and local sources, is



restoration of the Upper Truckee River in South Lake Tahoe. Development in the 1960s resulted in channelization of many miles of the river, and the draining of wetlands. This caused the river to become the lake's largest single source of sediment, which feeds the algae that rob the lake of clarity. Another important project underway is restoration of historic Washoe tribal wetland and riparian areas to improve native vegetation for cultural and spiritual tribal uses as well as improving water quality and habitat in streams which feed into Lake Tahoe. ♡

To find out more about the federal government's ongoing environmental projects in the Tahoe Basin, contact Jane Freeman at (775) 588-4547x248 or freeman.jane@epa.gov

vention training for dairy operators and third party (non-government) evaluations of manure handling systems. The centerpiece of the program is a three-day training course taught by **UC Davis Cooperative Extension Specialist Deanne Meyer**. In 2000, Meyer travelled throughout California, bringing the course to over 1,100 dairy operators. By year's end, ten dairies had become the first to be certified as complying with all federal, state, and local environmental regulations.

For more information on animal waste management, go to www.epa.gov/region09/animalwaste

Saving Coral Reefs: About 90% of all U.S. coral reef habitat is located in **Hawaii** and the Pacific Trust Territories, which includes the islands of **Guam, Saipan, American Samoa, and the Federated States of Micronesia**. EPA, as a participant in the federal government's

U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, is integrating coral reef protection into all environmental programs on these Pacific Islands. The Task Force's new reef conservation plan includes a goal of designating 20% of U.S. coral reefs as "no take" areas—where fishing and harvesting marine life is banned—by 2010. The government took a big step toward this goal in December 2000 by designating the **Northwest Hawaiian Islands**, encompassing an ocean area 1,200 nautical miles long and 100 nautical miles wide, as a Coral Reef Reserve.

Polluted Runoff Enforcement in Hawaii: In early 2000, EPA issued enforcement orders to Hawaii's State Highways Division, and its Airports Division, regarding inadequate sediment and erosion controls at highway construction projects on **Oahu and Kauai**, and inadequate polluted runoff controls at the **Kahului (Maui) and Lihue (Kauai)**

airports. EPA had issued similar orders in late 1999 regarding polluted runoff from roads throughout Oahu and the Honolulu International Airport. Together, these actions will reduce polluted runoff from road construction and major airports throughout the state.

EPA Approves California, Hawaii Polluted Runoff Plans: EPA in July and October 2000 approved plans developed by the states of California and Hawaii, respectively, to combat polluted runoff that fouls streams, lakes, rivers, and beaches after heavy rains or snowmelt. The new plans upgraded existing efforts to prevent such pollution. Together with the approvals, **EPA awarded grants of \$10.6 million to California and \$763,000 to Hawaii** to help carry out the plans. About half these funds will support community-based watershed protection projects.

Toxics Rule: In April 2000, EPA issued a regulation known as the **California Toxics Rule**, to reinstate water quality criteria for toxic pollutants in the state's rivers, streams, lakes, enclosed bays and estuaries. These criteria are the basis for limits on toxic pollutants specified in hundreds of wastewater and stormwater discharge permits issued by California's regional water quality control boards to factories, refineries, local governments and sewage treatment plants. The new rule has **empow-**

ered the state's water boards to more strictly limit toxic pollution as they process a backlog of permit renewals and write new permits.

Las Vegas Wash: Visitors on the Las Vegas Strip may never see Las Vegas Wash and its adjacent wetlands, but tourists and residents alike benefit from the natural ability of wetlands to filter pollutants from the area's treated wastewater and urban runoff, all of which flows downstream through the Wash into **Lake Mead**. The lake is **the Las Vegas area's main source of drinking water** (and a major source for Southern California). Unfortunately, the Las Vegas Valley's meteoric urban growth has added pollutants from city streets and increased stormwater flows in the Wash, cutting a deep channel which has lowered the water table and caused most of the wetlands to dry out, severely reducing their pollution-filtering and wildlife habitat value.

To restore the wetlands, the Southern Nevada Water Authority led a diverse array of federal, state, and local agencies, including EPA, in a partnership to develop a Comprehensive Adaptive Management Plan. Nevada's U.S. Senator Harry Reid lauded the plan's completion at a news conference near Henderson—just downstream from Las Vegas—in March 2000. The Plan's partners are already putting it into effect.